

**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)
APPLICATION PACKET**

▶ READ BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR OPT ◀

In order for you to maintain your status as an F-1 student on OPT you must comply with the following regulations:

MANDATORY

As an F-1 student you are required to report the following information to the Center for International Education office (CIE) during your OPT:

1. Address – complete home address where you are currently living **even if it is temporary**. You must update us within 10 days **EVERY** time you move to a new address.
2. Employer’s name and complete mailing address – you must find a job and report the address of the employer **within 90 days of the start date of your OPT**.
3. Any periods of unemployment – list specific dates that you are not employed.
4. New employment – you must report a new employee address within 10 days of changing jobs.

PLEASE ALSO PROVIDE

1. Any and all phone numbers
2. Any and all E-mail addresses

International Student Advisors are responsible for updating the SEVIS records for all international students to reflect any and all changes. The regulations governing these reporting requirements are **MANDATORY**. If we do not comply with these reporting requirements, you may be considered out of status as an F-1 student.

**YOU MUST KEEP IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH US DURING
OPT SO WE CAN UPDATE YOUR SEVIS RECORDS**



Optional Practical Training Agreement

By completing this form, I agree and understand the following:

I understand that in order to remain in status with USCIS during my OPT I **cannot be unemployed for more than 90 days during the 12 months of my OPT**; therefore, if I do not begin employment within the first 90 days of my OPT I will be illegally present in the United States and must return home. I also understand that any time spent outside of the U.S. during my OPT may also be considered unemployed time unless the travel is a part of my employment requirements and/or authorized by my employer. I must also secure a travel signature on my I-20 from the International Students and Scholars (ISS) office at the Center for International Education (CIE).

I understand that during my OPT I must inform the CIE office via the SEVP Portal, or OPT Update form, **within 10 days when any of the following information changes:**

1. My complete home address, **where I am currently living**, even if it is temporary.
2. Any and all E-mail addresses where I can be reached.
3. Any and all phone numbers where I can be reached.
4. My employer’s name and complete mailing address.
5. The dates of my employment, as well as, any dates that I was unemployed.

I understand that I also need to inform the CIE office if I am approved for a Change of Status (H1b for example) or if I decide not to use the entire year of my OPT and leave the country or return to school on a new I-20.

I understand that all information can be reported to the CIE office via E-mail at ipsupdates@siu.edu or by calling 618.453.5774.

Print name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

List All E-mail address(es): _____

Cell/landline phone number(s): _____

I would like to request a start date of _____ to begin my OPT employment. This date must be within my 60 day grace period. Once this application is mailed to USCIS, there will be no change to this requested start date. My DSO may use this date to complete my OPT recommendation in SEVIS and generate my OPT I-20. I understand that I will not be able to begin employment until the date approved by USCIS.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING – OPT

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is designed to provide you with an opportunity to gain practical experience in your field of study. As an F-1 student you may apply for OPT in the following cases:

OPT can be used in the following situations:

- Full-time, minimum 20 hours per week, during the annual summer vacation. You must be enrolled during the spring prior to and fall after your OPT period.
- Part-time, maximum 20 hours per week, while school is in session. You must be enrolled as a full-time student.
- Full-time, minimum 20 hours per week, at the end of your academic program.
- Special application deadlines apply to graduate students who have completed all their coursework. Once your course work is complete, you may apply for OPT while you are working on your thesis or dissertation.
- After completion of the course of study, or, for a student in a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degree program, after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or equivalent). Continued enrollment, to complete your thesis or dissertation, after all requirements for the degree have been met does not preclude eligibility for OPT.

Requirements:

- You must have been enrolled as a full-time student for one full academic year, currently maintaining a full-time program of study, in valid F-1 status, and intend to work in a job directly related to your major field of study.
- OPT is limited to one twelve month period for each progressive degree level you complete. One year for a Bachelor's, one for a Master's, and one for a Ph.D.
- Part-time OPT, 20 hours per week or less, is deducted from the twelve months at a rate of half time.
- The filing period begins at a maximum 90 days before you complete your academic program, or, in the case of a graduate student who has completed all course requirements excluding thesis/dissertation, 90 days before you would like your practical training job to begin. While it is possible to apply for OPT during the 60-day grace period following the end of your program, we advise against applying this late as it can take up to 3 months to obtain the OPT approval card.
- Any employment that is at minimum 20 hours per week, within your field of study, and paid or unpaid, is considered full-time employment while you are on OPT. If you are working in an unpaid position it is advised that you keep a log of your hours and have it initialed by your supervisor in lieu of payroll records. For your assistance, we have an **OPT Unpaid/Volunteer Time Recording Sheet** that is available upon request. There is debate about unpaid internships and volunteer work being accepted as employment. Please be advised, that unpaid internships and volunteer work may not be accepted as approved employment for OPT in the future.
- You **CANNOT WORK** until you have the EAD in your possession.
- An F-1 student authorized by the USCIS to engage in OPT is required to report any change of
 - Name
 - Address
 - Change, interruption, or termination of employment.
 - Email address or phone number

These changes must be reported within 10 days via the SEVP Portal. If the portal is not available, you may submit the OPT Update form available at the following link:

https://cie.siu.edu/_common/documents/current-cie-docs/opt-stem-update-form.pdf

IMPORTANT:

- Your receipt, Notice of Action I-797C, will indicate the date that your application was received by USCIS. Standard processing time is less than 90 days. In rare instances where the processing time has exceeded 90 days, please contact our office so that we may investigate further.
- Once you have your application for OPT there (at USCIS) it is very difficult to cancel the request, and in many cases results in issues when re-applying for your OPT later. Always **give very careful thought** to your decision to apply for OPT so that you will not lose this valuable experience if you change your mind.
- You may take an occasional class during your OPT. However, you cannot be a full time student or hold a student work position or a graduate assistantship. Authorization to engage in OPT employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.
- Do not travel outside of the U.S. while your OPT application is pending. The only time travel is advised during your OPT period is after you have your EAD card and have begun working for an employer. You should carry proof from your employer that they have authorized your leave and expect you to continue your employment upon your return to the U.S. You will need to get an updated signature on your OPT I-20 before you leave the country, so a month prior to your departure date email ipsupdates@siu.edu for travel signature arrangements.

You have a sixty day grace period after your OPT ends. If you plan on staying in the U.S. to begin a new academic program, you will need to obtain academic admission and a new I-20 before the end of your

- grace period to remain in status. Any change to a new status also needs to be applied for before the end of your grace period.
- The USCIS shall adjudicate the Form I-765 and issue an EAD on the basis of the recommendation from the DSO unless the student is found otherwise ineligible. The USCIS shall notify the applicant of the decision and, if the application is denied, of the reason or reasons for the denial. The applicant may not appeal the decision.

How to Apply:

- Complete all forms/documents in full (as outlined on the next page) and email scanned copies to ipsupdates@siu.edu.
- Upon receipt, an advisor will review all items and schedule a virtual appointment to discuss your application, answer questions, and issue the required I-20 recommendation.*

*At this time, we request all materials be sent via email to ipsupdates@siu.edu. Please do not mail the application to the CIE office.

F-1 Optional Practical Training Application Procedure

Bring the following to your OPT appointment at the Center for International Education:

REQUIRED FORMS

Form I-765 (Click the link to the left to type into the form) - The form must be completed, signed, dated and printed. The address fields have been completed so that your EAD will be sent to CIE. When your EAD arrives you will be contacted so that you can pick it up or we will send your EAD card to you at your current address via UPS. If you are applying for Post-Completion OPT, Question 27 should indicate (c) (3) (B). If you are applying for Pre-Completion OPT, Question 27 should be left blank. We will complete it for you in your appointment.

Optional Practical Training Advisor Recommendation form (attached) - The form must be completed and signed, indicating that you have been a full-time student every semester at SIUC and the date that you will complete your academic program.

Optional Practical Training Agreement (attached) - Complete and sign the form.

G-1145 (Click the link to the left to type into the form) – This will be used by USCIS to notify you of updates.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS*

Form I-20 (s) – You will need to bring photocopies of all previous I-20s.

Passport – You will need to bring a printed photocopy of your passport and any other biographical information page(s).

I-94 Printout- Make sure that you bring your printed I-94 card. This may be retrieved at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home> Remember, this should reflect your most recent date of entry into the U.S.

VISA – You will need to bring a printed photocopy of your most recent, expired or unexpired, visa you used the last time you entered the U.S.

***Be sure to bring printed photocopies of the above documents to your scheduled OPT appointment.**

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

\$410.00 processing Fee – You may use a personal check or money order. It must be made payable to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. Be sure to write it exactly as it is written here. See attached example in this packet for clarification.

Passport Photos – Two passport style, natural color photos, which were taken within the last 30 days and not previously used for any other documents. Photos must be clear with no discernible pixels or dot pattern. Additional guidelines and information can be obtained at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/photos.html>

EAD(s) – (If applicable) bring all previous EAD cards or copies from previous employment.

Job Offer Letter – (If applicable) bring a copy of your formal offer letter printed on company letterhead.

During your appointment an advisor will create your new OPT Form I-20. A scanned copy of the I-20 will be sent to you to attach with your application. This copy is required to apply for OPT. The original I-20 will be mailed to the address of your choice and should not be sent to USCIS. After receiving the copy of the OPT I20 you will need to send your application to the USCIS Lockbox. The application **must** reach the USCIS Lockbox within 30 days of the time that the I-20 is created on the day of your appointment.

If you are sending your application via the U.S. Postal Service (**Certified, Express Mail**) you must send it to the following address:

USCIS
PO Box 805373
Chicago, IL 60680

If you are sending your application through a courier service (such as **UPS or FedEx**) you must send it to the following address:

USCIS
Attn: I-765 C03
131 South Dearborn -
3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60603-5517



Optional Practical Training Advisor Recommendation

**TO BE COMPLETED BY
FACULTY ADVISOR/ADVISOR/PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

To: Center for International Education (CIE)
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale 62901-4333

From: _____, _____
Print Advisor's Name Title

Academic Unit's Address and Mail Code

Re: **Optional Practical Training Recommendation For:**
_____, _____
Print Student's Family Name, Given Name ID Number

This memo serves to confirm that the above-named student is currently, or was, a student in the Academic Unit of _____ at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale specializing or majoring in the field of _____. The practical training sought by this student is directly related to their field of study, commensurate with their educational level, and is recommended by this academic unit.

This student:

has maintained full-time enrollment status during each semester.

has not maintained full-time enrollment status due to the following reason:

This student (please check only one):

_____ is interested in practical training while school is in session (work must not exceed 20 hours per week).

STUDENT MUST MAINTAIN FULL TIME STATUS.

_____ has completed all course requirements and is expected to complete thesis or dissertation by _____/_____/_____

_____ has completed, or is expected to complete, the course of study and graduate on _____/_____/_____

Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Your completed check should look like this:

If this area
is not already
pre-printed
with your
information,
please print
your full name
here

JOHN DOE
123 MAIN STREET
CARBONDALE, IL 62901

0608
19-10/1250 3310

01-01-2001 DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF U.S. Department of Homeland Security \$ 410.00
Four hundred ten and 00/100 DOLLARS

FOR OPT app fee

000608 000000105 33330

DO NOT sign or write anything on the **BACK** of the check